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KIDNAPING CONVICTION SIDELINES FORMER PRO FOOTBALL PROSPECT FOR 32 YEARS

Montgomery, Alabama— Therral Hatfield, Sr., age 26, of Jefferson, Louisiana, was sentenced to serve 32 years in federal prison for kidnaping his ex-fiancee and her two children at gunpoint, U.S. Attorney Louis V. Franklin, Sr., announced today. A federal jury sitting in Montgomery found Hatfield guilty last November after a three day trial.

Evidence presented at trial showed that in the early morning hours of April 21, 2010, Hatfield, upset by the couple's recent breakup, lured his former fiancée, Latasha Hill, 29, to a quiet neighborhood street in New Orleans. After climbing into her car, he pointed a loaded gun at their two-year-old son's head and ordered her to drive. Hill's seven-year-old daughter was sitting in the backseat. A young male who assisted Hatfield with the kidnaping remains at large.

During the ensuing six hours, Hatfield kept Hill and her children in the car as he drove them from Louisiana through Mississippi and into Alabama. Hatfield told Hill little about his intentions except that he was taking them to Atlanta to start a new life. As Hill's friends and family learned of the situation and grew increasingly concerned, they called police and tried to convince Hatfield to turn himself in.

Ultimately, Hill took action herself, sneaking a pen with her into the women's restroom during a bathroom stop at the Yellowhammer convenience store in Escambia County, Alabama. While Hatfield stood outside the door, Hill hastily wrote out a note on the back of a paper towel asking for help. The note included a description of her car, the direction they were traveling, and a phone number for her family. After the note was found by another patron, Yellowhammer employees promptly alerted law enforcement.

Alabama State Trooper Adam Robinson spotted Hill's car traveling northbound on Interstate 65 and initiated a traffic stop just inside the Butler County line. Officers found Hatfield in the driver's seat and his fully loaded Ruger 45 automatic handgun in the driver's side door sleeve. Hatfield had Hill's cell phone in his pants pockets. A box of ammunition and a backpack containing more ammunition and four bungee cords were also discovered in the car.

When he was arrested, Hatfield gave officers a false name, social security number, and date of birth. During a subsequent interview with the FBI, Hatfield claimed that they were taking a family vacation to see Hill's relatives in Atlanta.

Evidence presented at trial also established that Hatfield, a native of New Orleans, played football in high school and college and was on the cusp of breaking into the NFL as a free agent running back when the crime was committed. In fact, the kidnaping occurred just one day before the 2010 NFL draft.

The sentence handed down by the Honorable W. Keith Watkins, Chief United States District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama, was the minimum allowed under the law, which provides stiff penalties for kidnaping a child. As part of his sentence, Hatfield was also ordered to serve 5 years on supervised release.

This case was investigated by agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation – Montgomery and New Orleans Field Offices, and the Alabama Department of Public Safety, with assistance from the Butler County (Alabama) Sheriff's Office, the Escambia County (Alabama) Sheriff's Office, the Conecuh County (Alabama) Sheriff's Office, the Jefferson Parish (Louisiana) Sheriff's Office, the St. Charles (Louisiana) Sheriff's Office, and the New Orleans Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Nathan D. Stump and Susan R. Redmond.